Compare/Contrast Essay

Digital Citizenship in Schools v. Literacy, Technology and Diversity

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The two books *Digital Citizenship in Schools* by Ribble and Bailey (2007) and *Literacy, Technology, and Diversity: Teaching for Success in Changing Times* by Cummins, Brown and Sayers (2007) discuss perspectives and responsibilities for technology. Themes illustrated in both books compare the pertinence of technology and literacy today, and that all students do not have the same access to computers and therefore do not know the appropriate ways to be a successful technology citizen. In order to value the intricacy of technology citizenship and diversity in the 21st century, one must analyze the research from both source and then find commonalities because the books contrast more than compare. *Digital Citizenship* discusses the standards and expectations of digital citizenship, while *Literacy, Technology and Diversity* focuses on diversity and how it impacts educational technology. To begin with, I will present the more evident contrasting issues and thereafter I will present the comparisons in order to bring together two sources that relate to educational technology in the 21st century.

*Digital Citizenship in Schools* by Ribble and Bailey (2007) was produced for The International Society for Technology in Education, or ISTE. The book was designed for school districts, teachers, and leaders to “provide a basis for understanding digital citizenship, the current trends in this area, and the potential needs our students will face in the future” (Bailey and Ribble, 2007 p.2). This resource provides information for technology leaders and students. The example lesson plans within the material should be helpful to many technology instructors. Technology users should be exposed to the information provided to ensure positive citizenry.

With students beginning to use technology before their tenth birthday, many children are exposed to technology but not sure how to use all of the digital tools correctly. Bailey and Ribble (2007) explain the nine elements of digital citizenship with simplicity to support schools with producing successful digital citizens. The first element addressed is Digital Access or “full electronic participation in society” (p.14). Ranging from an alarm clock to e-mail to a web page, our everyday lives have become dependent upon technology. Because business and school sites use technology, every person in society needs to have access to digital tools. Although students may not have a computer at home, they need to know that locations within their neighborhoods, such as libraries and schools offer technological support- if the participant can show active productivity as a digital citizen.

Digital commerce is “the buying and selling of goods online” (Bailey and Ribble, 2007, p.16). In order to purchase and sell wisely, one must know how to research companies and look out for fraud, scams, etc. Public sites such as cragslist.org can provide great experiences, but also gives access to those who take advantage of consumers. For example, when inquiring about a car, a person on Craigslist can easily hack into an e-mail account and send out viruses. ISTE expects digital citizens to purchase and sell goods discerningly (p.17). Good citizenship must accompany an intelligent consumer.

Digital citizens must oblige to the standard of conduct expected by users (p.24). Cingular Wireless Cell Phone Company observed digital etiquette with customers. A survey concluded that 39% of customers had answered a phone while having a face to face conversation (p. 24). Dynamic citizens do not ignore those around them or respond inappropriately to online users. Digital etiquette gives respect to those around them. Users should not make threats on Facebook or call other students inappropriate names online or in texts, blogs, or web pages. Citizens conduct themselves appropriately with knowing the rules and regulations with digital technology. Online users must also know their “legal rights and restrictions governing technology use” (Bailey, Ribble, 2007, p. 26). With that come digital rights and responsibilities-expectations, privileges and freedoms to all digital users. “Students need to be given a clear understanding of the behavior that is required of them [in order] to be members of the digital society” (p.29). Exceptional digital citizens show courtesy and know their rights and responsibilities as technology users.

Health, wellness and security accompany rights and responsibilities. The well-being of individuals has significance for digital citizens. Bodily harm and dependence on technology occur more often now that students use digital tools at an earlier age (p.32). Incorrect posture and use of hands on the keyboard can cause serious injuries. Gaming systems and software requires hours and days to conquer or progress, therefore, people of all ages spend massive amounts of time responding to their digital addiction. Users need to take precautions to ensure safety and security of a network. Students should understand that “Any computer that does not have virus protection [with up-to-date virus definitions] is vulnerable” (p.33-34). Sharing passwords and meeting strangers online can potentially be dangerous. Users must demonstrate safety, security and well-being when operating digital instruments.

Digital consumers need to apprehend the elements of citizenship presented by ISTE in order to use technological tools appropriately and diligently. Citizens must have digital access and etiquette, commerce, wellness and security knowledge, while accompanied with understanding rights and responsibilities as a technology user. So that one may produce compliant digital citizens in schools, instruction of all of the previous explained elements proves to be pertinent in schools.

According to Bailey and Ribble (2007), “School technology leaders set the tone for appropriate technology use by educating teachers, administrators, parents, and community members about digital citizenship” (p.41). This prepares students for entering the digital world and being able to function with confidence. Leader must show good examples. If cell phone usage is not permitted with students, teachers should do the same (p.78). Helping students progress through new technology skills takes well-trained citizens, and the best way to show students what that looks like is by being a positive digital citizen as well. The main point of the book *Digital Citizens in Schools* by Bailey and Ribble (2007)is that “Good digital citizens understand the social reasons for adhering to such rules” to be able to function in the digital society, just like the “real world”. (p.131)

In contrast, Brown, Cummins and Sayers (2007) have written the book *Literacy, Technology, and Diversity: Teaching for Success in Changing Times*. The literature suggests that the norm today in urban schools is “cultural and linguistic diversity” in North America and Europe. Pedagogical framework for addressing these issues will increase literacy (p.40). The more students experience, the more they are ready for the world. They need exposure to prior knowledge, skills, beliefs, and concepts (p.40). Brown, Cummins and Sayers respond to the idea of learning by stating, “Students must be provided with opportunities to learn with understanding in order to transform information.” The authors then state, “Deeper levels of understanding are required to transfer knowledge from one context to another” (p. 43). Students have opportunities to learn the maximum for their Zone Proximal Developmental level and the more they learn through inquiry and experience, the more they will understand and transfer. Brown, Cummins and Sayers believe students should eventually develop as metacognitive learners with the correct support and pedagogical instruction (43).

Although children attend school daily, there still “is an urgent necessity to teach for deep understanding and critical literacy;” says Brown, Cummins and Sayers (2007); “The survival of democratic institutions depends on it” (p.46). In order to achieve pedagogical knowledge, multiliteracies require presence in schools. The authors believe multiliteracies support culture and diversity, as well as a broad range of topics to support and expand reading and writing skills (p.46). Using multiliteracies daily can assist with comprehending and developing language.

Literacy and academic language development among low-income and English Language Learners (ELLs) may require a more rigorous instructional method, or a different approach to ensure that all learners comprehend the curriculum (p.49). ELL students are in the process of breaking down and apprehending a whole new language. Brown, Cummons and Sayers (2007) present three aspects of proficiency in a language that must be focused on with ELLs:

1. Conversational fluency-the ability to carry on a conversation in familiar face-face situations.
2. Discrete Language Skills-that involve the learning of the rule-governed aspects of language with generalizations permitted. Language can be learned through direct instruction or literacy immersion.
3. Academic Language Proficiency- the knowledge of the less frequent vocabulary of English as well as the ability to interpret and produce increasingly complex written language (p.50).

The research provided in *Literacy, Technology, and Diversity: Teaching for Success in Changing Times* shows that between the grades 4-11, gaps begin to form in achievement and the language can become “overwhelming” (p.53). This supports the reason of importance to use pedagogical knowledge and build upon what the students already know. Another issue with learning English academic language deals with the lack of exposure to many experiences with low-income students and ELLs, and therefore have conflicts with connecting prior knowledge to understand the new material (p.55). This reason has become one of the major explanations as to why there are scripted texts for students who have trouble connecting prior knowledge with new concepts. The skills can be taught in isolation and considered successful for students who need specific expertise, but inadequate for students who enjoy immersion literacy (p.58-61). Either way, students may not grasp all of the information presented. Technology can support struggling students or challenge students to find alternative reinforcements for learning language.

Mar Vista Elementary in Oxnard California had two teachers, Amanda Irma Perez and Michelle Singer, who understood that their students needed to relate to experiences and still grasp pedagogical instruction. The teachers took the their third grade and fifth grade classes, and focused on Cooperative Education Movement (collaboration) , as well as Modern School Movement (pairings and wider partnership worldwide) (p.120-125). They created Project FRESA.

Project FRESA began as a project to learn more about strawberries. The teachers encouraged them to use technology for research, WebPages, charts, graphs, e-mails, chats and blogs. During their Friday meetings, the students explored and learned political science, history, reading, language arts and math. As they continued in their research, they learned about the unfair treatment of laborers and using pesticides. The students wrote letters to the governor of California for change in farm labor. They blogged about their experiences and continued to teach and mentor families and younger students about their project. It created bonds with their relatives and farming community. Their motivation produced success in literacy, math and history (Brown, Cummins and Sayers, 2007, p.128-145). Project FRESA exemplifies using multiliteracies and technology to reach all students with core subjects.

The books *Citizenship in Schools* by Mike Ribble and Gerald Bailey and *Literacy, Technology and Diversity* by Kristin Brown, Jim Cummins and Dennis Sayers demonstrate the necessity of technology for literacy today and the point that not everyone has access to computers, which limits the knowledge of appropriate ways to be a dynamic digital citizen. Bailey and Ribble (2007) state, “With technology, we cannot assume that everyone knows what is appropriate and what is not” (p.11). They also state that “most students have never been taught the appropriate use of technology” (p.81). In *Literacy, Technology and Diversity,* Brown, Cummins and Sayers (2007) concur that it is important for students to prepare for civic participation. “Effective citizenship requires active intelligence and a willingness to challenge power structures that construct human possibility.” They later state, “If instruction doesn’t promote active intelligence from children’s first day of school, or promotes it only in middle-class suburban schools, then it is failing both students and society” (p.63-65). Every child has the right to access digital technology and to learn the best of his or her Zone Proximal Development ability. In the process of being immersed with technology, students must learn digital citizenship because “schools are now expected to develop twenty-first century literacy skills, which are heavily dependent on mastery of new technology” (p.40). Access to and experiences with digital tools prepare students for independence and civility in their educational futures.

Bailey & Ribble (2007) provide some example lessons given by to support International Society for Technology in Education-ISTE and National Educational Technology Standards-NETS uses of digital technology use. One example is the students can look at scenarios and decide if the students are using the technology appropriately or inappropriately. Another example is students can get a “Digital Driver’s License. “PBS Kids Go!” offers an exam that the students take online. If they pass, they get a digital license (p.83-102). Students can easily get excited about technology, but at the same time, pertinence for their citizenship in using digital tools ensures safe, healthy relationships with others and themselves. Once students learn the appropriate uses, they can use the applicable digital tools for learning.

One of the new skills that both books agree students need in order for success in the digital and social world is communication. Communication is the “electronic exchange of information” (Bailey & Ribble, 2007, p.19). The district and school sites must assess and make adjustments in order to provide the necessary equipment for communication, and leaders are responsible for making sure all students are taught the appropriate use of the communication technology. Common digital communication topics that require addressing are “e-mail, cell phones, videoconferencing, instant messaging, text messaging, blogs, and wikis” (p.20). Brown, Cummins & Sayers (2007) argue that “Learning doesn’t only take place inside of heads, it also involves socialization” (p.44). Students can e-mail scholars or workers, create blogs to express themselves, and chat with a friend once in a while. Both books imply that humans enjoy interacting and learning from one another. The same concept applies to school settings.

An example lesson for using socialization and communication comes from Bailey & Ribble (2007). They gave an idea for school leaders to have an “Appreciation Blog.” Each teacher has the responsibility to write a blog about a teacher that they would like to recognize. They give examples of why the teacher deserves recognition, and then other teachers may read the blog and comment on the blog. After, the teachers can teach their students the same methods and the appropriate uses of digital tools. This can be taught to teachers first and then to students.

Another example is while someone is speaking to the group, another teacher walks in snapping pictures of everyone. A few minutes later, a teacher will have his or phone ring (on purpose) during the meeting (p.47-63). This demonstrates how digital the inappropriate use of digital technology. Throughout *Digital Citizenship in Schools (2007)*, examples of lessons for school or district leaders are available for them to teach students. It is important to note that “technology leaders should choose activities that will keep users in their comfort zone until they are ready for stronger challenges” (p.47). That way, teachers will not have an overwhelming feeling and they are more willing to use the technology in the classroom, not teach it as a separate class (p.22). As strong digital citizens, digital skills can develop. The more technological skills developed, the more students will learn through technology.

In conclusion, learning technology helps engage readers, regardless of their barriers of achievement. They will become more interested in completing assignments and using digital tools to complete projects and show what they have learned. If the technology is too burdensome, the students will disengage and may become disinterested in reading (Brown, Cummins, & Sayers, 2007 p.48). No matter what gender, ethnic background, family income or education, all students have the right to technology and must learn how to use it correctly. “There is still a formidable gap that separates the haves and have-nots” (p.94). But, with significant research, there is proof that students in low-income areas are just as successful with pedagogical instruction and more computer use (p.97). No matter the school, educational technology should be implemented accompanied by productive digital citizens.

Technology use continues to increase at an intense rate, thus demands the knowledge of digital citizenship. If students learn the appropriate use of technology, they will be more successful with digital tools and students will become more engaged in literacy. These books have shown research in diversity and technology and how they connect. With students so interested in technology, more students need more involvement no matter what academic barriers they may possess. Digital citizenship is just as important as citizenship in the real world. Technology must be used more often and appropriately in order to produce positive, healthy, safe, and engaged learners.

References

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